Wish I Hadn't Got So Much Better

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Wish I Hadn't Got So Much Better

by human_person234

Summary

> “Midoriya, what is this?”
>
> Aizawa was holding a piece of notebook paper that had been folded in quarters and tucked in the middle of a notebook. Izuku didn’t recognize it immediately, but when he got a glimpse of the sloppy handwriting, the blood drained from his face.
>
> “Oh my god. I’m so sorry, that shouldn’t be in there. I’m so glad you found it, I can’t imagine if Eri saw…”
>
> “Is this what I think it is?”
>
> Izuku swallowed around the lump in his throat.
>
> Aizawa had found his high school suicide note.

When looking through Izuku's old analysis notebooks from high school, Aizawa finds the suicide note Izuku wrote in his second year at UA. He insists it's all in the past, but re-reading the note sparks some reflection for Izuku. Maybe he's not as okay as he thought.

Notes

A couple major warnings: There's no graphic suicide attempt, but there's a lot of very detailed suicidal ideation. Also, definite manga spoilers, but if you don't know them, then you probably won't be able to tell what's a spoiler and what I made up???

See the end of the work for more notes

Chapter 1

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Izuku twisted the cap off a second bottle of beer and passed it to his former teacher. Aizawa grunted his thanks and took a sip before settling back onto the couch, massaging his leg where he'd detached his prosthesis.

"So Eri wants to look at some of my old notebooks, huh? I'm glad I kept them around, then," said Izuku, gesturing to the two large cardboard boxes he'd haphazardly perched on the coffee table.

It was as good an excuse as any for the two pro heroes to have a drink and decompress after work. At first it had been weird for Izuku to work alongside his former teacher as an equal, but after a few years of regular team-ups between their agencies, they'd settled into a comfortable rhythm. This had become a habit for them—a beer or two after any meetings or missions that left them relatively uninjured.

Tonight's patrol had been uneventful; they were in the early stages of an investigation and had just been gathering intel. Although Izuku was a spotlight hero, the versatility of his quirks—especially Danger Sense—allowed him to assist in more delicate operations when necessary. So, once again, he'd found himself heading home from an evening mission in the same direction as his former teacher. Aizawa had mentioned that Eri was doing a quirk analysis project for one of her classes, and twenty minutes later here they were.

Izuku kept up with his analysis after graduation but had switched to a complicated code in order to protect what he'd realized was dangerous information. The only notebooks left unencoded were those from his childhood. Izuku had considered destroying them or rewriting them in code, but the information was old enough now that it wasn't all that dangerous. And maybe he was a *little* sentimental about all of his "Hero Analysis for the Future" books—so sue him.

"She's doing some kind of paper on quirk development over the course of a hero's career. She wants to use Uravity as an subject, and I mentioned that you'd been analyzing her quirk since your first year at UA. I hope you don't mind."

“No, not at all! These things have just been sitting around for years. It would be nice to know I didn’t keep them around for nothing. I’m pretty sure the earliest notebooks are in this box…”

After taking a swig of his beer, Izuku started rummaging around in the box closest to him, flipping through notebooks and reflecting on those early years—so tumultuous, so full of danger and tragedy, but still some of the happiest years of his life.

Aizawa set his bottle down and moved toward the other box.

“Jeez, kid, you really churned these out. Are these really all from high school?”

“Nah, I started when I was a little kid. The oldest ones are in crayon, and I think the first book is all All Might. I came to some sophisticated conclusions, like ‘very mighty’ and ‘best hero.’” Izuku chuckled.

“Can I take a look?”

“Go ahead, just don’t judge elementary school Deku too harshly.”

“These look like some from UA, actually,” said Aizawa as he flipped through the notebooks on top. “Lemillion, Suneater, Nejire… There are all pretty good. I can say it now that you’re out of school—you were a smart kid.”

Izuku feigned affront. “That’s definitely something you could have said while I was in school! Some would argue it’s exactly the kind of thing a teacher *should* say to his students.”

Aizawa huffed a laugh. “Don’t let it go to your head.”

“Well, if you find any Uravity in there, pull it out. Eri is probably going to end up with way more than she needs.”

They sat in comfortable silence for a while, turning pages and occasionally remarking on notable passages, places where Izuku’s hypotheses had been correct or way off the mark, questions that were still unanswered.

Izuku was caught up in a particularly interesting analysis of Dark Shadow from their third Sports Festival and didn’t immediately notice Aizawa go still. His voice was measured when he spoke—too flat.

“Midoriya, what is this?”

Aizawa was holding a piece of notebook paper that had been folded in quarters and tucked in the middle of a notebook. Izuku didn't recognize it immediately, but when he got a glimpse of the sloppy handwriting, the blood drained from his face.

"Oh my god. I'm so sorry, that shouldn't be in there. I'm so glad you found it, I can't imagine if Eri saw…"

"Is this what I think it is?"

Izuku swallowed around the lump in his throat.

Aizawa had found his high school suicide note.

"Midoriya, what is this?"

Shota didn't really need the confirmation—the content of the note was enough—but he couldn't quite believe it.

Midoriya? Of all of the kids in his hell class, *Midoriya?* He'd known the kid had a rough go of it—he was breaking his bones just to pass in-class exercises, for god's sake. When the problem child ran off at the end of his first year to take on Shigaraki by himself, Aizawa had learned just how much weight the kid had been carrying on his own—a haunted quirk, a centuries-old nemesis, an incredible responsibility. It was more than he could have imagined, much more than any teenager should have been burdened with.

But this note was from his second year, after things had settled down. Was *that* what had triggered it? Shota had seen colleagues crash after big missions, knew how a hero's heart could feel hollow in the aftermath, how even a perfect victory could leave one feeling unanchored and purposeless.

The note suggested a more deeply-rooted issue, however.

I'm sorry.

I really thought things would be different, after everything. It feels so stupid to be giving up now. But honestly, it's kind of a relief.

I think I've fulfilled my purpose as well as I could. There's a lot I did wrong, though, and people are dead because of me. So many I couldn't save. But there's no going back now.

Mom, I'm sorry. At least you don't have to watch me get hurt

anymore. I love you. Thank you for supporting me even though my dream was hopeless.

Kacchan, I forgive you. For everything. This has nothing to do with you, so please don't feel bad. Not that you would, I don't mean to assume, but…you know. For me, that's all in the past.

All Might, thank you. In spite of everything, the last two years have been the best of my life, and it's all thanks to your faith in me. I know it's selfish to feel this way, because so many bad things happened and I made so many mistakes. I'm sorry I took Nighteye from you. But thank you for trusting me, and thank you for giving me a purpose. I'm sorry I couldn't be a better successor. Please don't be angry with me for letting One For All end like this.

I'm sorry I couldn't be a better hero.

Izuku

The image of a young Midoriya Izuku scrawling out this letter in his UA dorm, still so small despite the muscle he was slowly putting on, green hair still sticking out in all directions—it made Shota nauseous.

"Is this what I think it is?"

If the words on the page weren't enough, Midoriya's face confirmed Shota's suspicions.

The younger hero stuttered as he spoke, reverting to a habit he'd kicked in his first year as a pro.

"I-it's, uh…" And then his shoulders slumped in resignation. "Yeah, it is."

A million questions raced through Aizawa's mind—why? are you okay now? could I have done anything?—but for some reason the one that fell out of his mouth was, "How did I not notice?"

Midoriya's eyes softened. "I was very good at hiding things back then."

Shota's mouth opened and closed. He was at a loss.

"It was…a really difficult time. I won't lie. But that was a long time ago, sensei."

Midoriya didn't call him sensei very often anymore, and it was usually

teasing. Shota wouldn't admit it, but it made his heart swell a bit every time. He'd given up teaching after the war, but he'd never been able to shake the pride and protectiveness he felt for his last group of kids. It lingered most on Midoriya and Hitoshi, who he saw more than the rest of them.

"That doesn't make it less upsetting. Did you ever talk to anyone? If you don't mind telling me." He tried to remind himself he wasn't in charge anymore, he wasn't a teacher.

"No, I just realized it wasn't a viable solution. Not logical, you know?"

Midoriya attempted a weak laugh. Shota didn't. He couldn't stop thinking about how he failed this kid, his kid. How long had he been suffering before it got to that point? Was that his first note? Was it his last?

"But you…" His mouth was dry. "It isn't something you still think about, is it?"

The kid—not a kid, really, but Shota couldn't stop seeing sixteen-year-old Midoriya in his place—rubbed the back of his neck.

"No… I mean, just the normal amount, you know? I wouldn't do it or anything."

"Kid, the 'normal amount' is not at all."

Midoriya was quiet for a moment.

"It's okay, really. I was just a kid then. I'm an adult now, I know better."

If someone had asked Shota if he ever thought about suicide, his answer would not have been *I know better,* it would have been a clear-cut 'absolutely not.'

"You know suicide isn't just something moody teens do, right? You wouldn't say that if we were talking about a friend of yours, would you?"

Midoriya was quick to wave his hands in protest. "No, not at all! I just mean, as an adult, I have people relying on me. I have obligations, and I realize how much it would hurt my friends and my mom. I'm past that. It's really not something I think about."

That response was still lacking the conviction Shota was hoping for.

“It’s not enough to just have reasons not to die, kid. You deserve to want to live.”

Midoriya was turning red, and it only made him look younger. When he spoke, however, his voice held a firmness that subtly cautioned Shota not to overstep, to remember that he was talking to a peer and a pro hero, not a teenager.

“I know. Seriously! Honestly, all of that’s behind me. I swear.”

Shota was still worried and feeling protective, but all he could do was offer the same support he would to any other pro.

“Okay, I believe you. But if you ever want to talk more about it, let me know. Seriously.”

“It’s really not that big a deal, though.”

“It doesn’t have to be a big deal, it can just be something we talk about sometime.”

“Okay, *dad,* chill,” Midoriya teased, but then offered a genuine smile. “Thanks.”

Izuku was *mortified.* He’d forgotten he even still had that note.

He kept it around on purpose, at first. It started as security—he could be ready to go at any time, no preparation required. Later, it was a reminder to never let it get that bad again. Eventually, he’d completely forgotten it existed.

Izuku was horrified that Aizawa had found it, but *so glad* it hadn’t ended up in Eri’s hands.

After the older hero left with a stack of notebooks and a promise to tell Eri he said hello, Izuku unfolded the note and re-read it. It was easy to forget how hard things had been in high school. Sure, he still regularly faced life-or-death situations, but it was nothing like it had been in those early days. During the war. After the war.

It had started long before UA, though. How could he not think about suicide, when his middle school classmates left spider lilies on his desk at least weekly, when the only mention of quirkless people in the media was to note rising suicide rates, when Kacchan had told him to

take a swan dive off the roof?

Izuku had thought about it a *lot*.

Now, though?

He wasn't just trying to placate Aizawa by saying he was over it. It had been a long, slow process, but that was ages ago. He never told anyone, never brought it up in therapy—basically every hero he knew was in therapy, it was standard—but he'd worked through it himself. He was in a better place now.

Izuku picked up the note and read through it a few times, unable to stop picturing himself at that age. He had been so young. He couldn't imagine losing someone that age—Eri's age.

He felt a fist close around his heart at the thought of her going through anything close to what he had.

No, he had grown up and moved on. Izuku could never do something like that to his friends, his family. At this point in his career, he had fans, too. What would they think?

No, unacceptable. He didn't think about it anymore.

He was fine now.

The thing was, over the next week, he found himself thinking about it quite often.

Not thinking about actually *doing* it, but just…the idea of it.

Suicide.

Now that it had been summoned, it just floated around in the back of his head, day and night.

Izuku had put the note away in a file with other personal documents from his youth. He wasn't sure why he kept it, but at this point it felt like an important part of his history.

It's not like he could use it anyway—he'd need to write a new one.

Wait. What?

Thoughts like that—where did that come from?

He chalked it up to intrusive thoughts and went about his business.

It wasn't until he had a genuinely shitty day that Izuku actually worried himself a little bit.

He made a mistake in a fight. He jumped left when he should have gone right and slammed into an apartment building with a kick powered by 85% of One For All, collapsing an entire exterior wall. Luckily, injuries were mostly minor, and no one died. One of the rookie heroes at his agency had a broken leg and would be on desk duty for a few weeks. The jump had been captured on video and was being dissected by the media. The villain had been captured, but not by Izuku. It was not a huge deal, but it was *stupid.*

He hadn't been careless or cocky, he just moved wrong—but that somehow made him feel worse.

Izuku was going to have to go into his agency the next day, look at that newbie hero's desk, and think about how he'd been wrong. He'd have to file paperwork that basically just said, "Deku is stupid and was wrong." Any media appearances he made in the next month, planned or not, would include him being asked, "You demolished an apartment building for no reason—are you a fucking idiot?"

Basically.

He hated thinking about it, hated how fixated he was on a stupid mistake that anyone could have made, that everyone would recover from. He hated that he was going to have to think about it every day for a month, until that rookie hero went back to active duty. Maybe longer. Maybe forever.

Izuku loved being a hero, but on days like this his brain would plead with him—*don't go back, stay home, don't deal with it, never look anyone in the eye again, it's not worth it.*

I would rather die than deal with this stupid aftermath but people would absolutely connect the dots and think it had something to do with my death, like I couldn't handle criticism, which would be stupid, so I guess I have to fucking wait it out until enough time has passed that no one would make the connection before I can finally fucking transcend this mortal plane—

What the fuck?

Was that a serious thought?

Izuku was pretty sure he wouldn't actually kill himself to get out of dealing with the aftermath of some frankly run-of-the-mill property damage. Was this something his brain supplied him with because he'd found that note?

It had felt normal when it popped into his head, like a running joke.

Izuku shook it off. He could deal with a little embarrassment, a little extra paperwork. He was fine.

It happened again a few days later when he hung up the phone after his weekly call with his mother.

Despite his success as a hero, he had never been able to shake the feeling that he'd disappointed his mother. She would have been happier if he did something quiet, something safe. She would have liked grandchildren, for him to get married. She had been happy for him when he got into UA, but it had also destroyed her.

If I killed myself, it would be the final nail in her coffin.

…Where did *that* thought come from?

But the thoughts just kept coming.

How selfish that would be. He'd already taken so much from his mother. First, by being born quirkless, by driving his father away. He knew his childhood had been hard on her. And then, when he was finally getting old enough to take care of himself, he'd gotten a quirk and become the target of the most dangerous villains in Japan—in the *world.* She'd sacrificed so much for him, and all he'd ever done was worry her and put her in danger.

If I had killed myself in middle school, she'd be over it by now.

But he couldn't do it *now,* not now that he was supposed to know better. Who would take care of her? Izuku was all she had left. She would have to bury her only child, her last remaining family. He would have amounted to nothing but a useless son who never gave her a moment of peace. *What a despicable thing to do, and I wouldn't even be alive to suffer for it. I wouldn't deserve the peace I'd get from dying.*

…*what the* fuck?

And then he was overwhelmed by disgust with himself and, frustratingly, anger toward his mother.

Maybe if she was gone I could just die.

She's got, what, twenty years tops? Can I make it that long? Maybe she'll get sick.

Izuku stuffed his phone in his pocket, changed into his athletic gear, and spent the rest of the evening trying to drive his thoughts away with exhaustion.

It sort of worked.

He noticed it more and more after that, and it was impossible to know if it had started because Aizawa found the note or if Izuku was only *noticing* it because of the note.

If he had paused to be honest with himself, he would have acknowledged that the thought patterns were too familiar to be new.

I'd rather die than go to this event.

Who would take the cat if I died? I couldn't do that to her.

I wonder if they'd be sad I was gone. Would they even be surprised?

Would they think it's because I'm not cut out to be a hero? It's not that.

He caught himself thinking these tiny suicidal thoughts in just about every moment of irritation, anxiety, or disappointment throughout the day. Like it was his way of coping with negative emotions—imagining the most extreme conclusion and working backwards to remind himself why he shouldn't do it.

That probably wasn't healthy, right?

Izuku considered bringing it up in his next therapy session, but it felt like making a big deal out of nothing. He wasn't planning on actually killing himself, so it wasn't a big deal. He just had a morbid imagination, there was nothing wrong with that.

When he'd started seeing this therapist, she—like every therapist he'd seen before—had asked if he had ever considered suicide or self-harm. It hadn't felt like lying when he said no, because he hadn't *really* tried it. Not expecting it to work. He'd just been curious. He wasn't

struggling the way other people were.

It felt the same now. Bringing it up in therapy would be making a big deal out of nothing, and it could have lasting consequences. If his psychiatrist found out, he might take away the sleeping pills.

Izuku couldn’t handle that.

Chapter End Notes

> If you are a person who is following When Believing is Hard, please know that this fic made me insane and unable to do anything, but now that it's done I'm hoping to get back to that one.
>
> pspspsps I have a tumblr
>
> OH forgot to mention update schedule. Probably will upload again in a couple of days because I have no patience. It's only three chapters, so it'll be done within the week.

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Izuku is having a good day.

Patrol is mostly uneventful. He even stops to take photos with some fans on his way back to the agency—something that always puts him in a good mood.

He eats a nice dinner, cleans up, and runs to the corner store to restock his fridge with beer and a bottle of whiskey. Izuku relaxes on the sofa and decides to treat himself to a few more drinks than he usually would on a weeknight—it's almost the end of the month anyway. He has nothing stressful planned for the rest of the week and the weather tomorrow is supposed to be lovely.

Once he's nice and tipsy, it's time to get ready for bed. Izuku's actually in a pretty good mood for once. So he almost doesn't clock the jolt of anxiety that shoots through him when he opens his bottle of sleeping pills.

Not enough.

He has enough left to last him a week and a half. It's too early to fill next month's prescription—he knows because he tries to refill it early nearly every month and is always turned away. It will be fine; he has plenty of time in the coming week to run the errand.

But that isn't what his brain is warning him about.

If he takes his sleeping pill tonight, he won't have enough left over to kill himself, not for certain.

Well, that's what the extra booze is for.

…

Wait—

Izuku's breath catches.

—what?

He hurriedly screws the lid back on the pill bottle.

What the fuck *was that?*

That's…a new level of intrusive thought. Was that really just because he found his old suicide note last week?

No. Izuku knows it wasn't. He can tell that the strange thoughts he's caught himself having all week are habitual, patterns he's been following for a long, long time. They're too familiar, too comfortable. He's tried to deny it, but he knows.

And after a moment of stunned reflection, Izuku realizes this thought about the pills is the same kind of thing. It's a habit.

He gets anxious like this *every month.* That's why he always tries to refill early, so he won't have to think about it. The reason he knows how many of his sleeping pills it will take to kill him is because he looked it up. The reason he restocks his booze at this time every month is because he wants to have it around just in case—in case the pills aren't enough.

This problem is more deeply embedded in his life than he realized.

This is…worse than the other stuff, right?

Because now that he's thinking about it, he can't stop. He pictures it: pouring all of the remaining pills into his hand, knocking them back, and washing them down with a pull from the whiskey he'd picked up earlier. He'll keep drinking the whiskey, maybe alternate with beer. Hopefully that will be enough to do the trick. He'll feel loopy, get tired, lay down and drift away drift away driftawaydrift—

It's like there was something magnetic in the bottle, like some pressure building behind his eyes, some force keeping him from relaxing his hands. He's vibrating with potential bad decisions, his teeth are buzzing, he can feel it in his spine.

It's a monumental effort for Izuku to set the bottle down on his bedside table. He still can't take his eyes off of it, but the pull is a little weaker.

What the absolute *fuck* was that?

The thing that scares Izuku the most is that although part of him is terrified, another part of him registers this as completely normal.

He can't really pretend it's normal anymore.

Should he bring this up with his therapist? It's not like he wants to die, not right now, not exactly. But there were times this week when he really did feel like he'd be better off dead. He told himself it was normal, everyone felt that way sometimes, that didn't mean they'd *do* it.

But clearly, for him, it wasn't always strictly hypothetical. What if that incident with the apartment building he accidentally destroyed happened today instead of last week? If he was in that mindset when he realized he was running low on pills? Would he have done it?

He really, really wants to say no.

But Izuku doesn't trust his own mind right now.

Still, if he mentions it in therapy, especially the bit about his sleeping pills, wouldn't that have consequences? Would he be pulled from hero work? Would his medication get taken away?

He doesn't want that, and not just because he wants to hang onto the means to kill himself. He's been taking those to sleep for years and wouldn't do well without them. And the thought of anyone knowing he feels this way makes his skin crawl.

Should he tell a friend?

That's what people always say to do, right?

But he can't think of who. He loves Tenya and Ochako, but he doesn't think either of them would understand the nuances of this kind of thing. They would probably insist on checking him into a mental hospital for just *saying* the word "suicide."

Izuku feels like Hitoshi might understand, but the two only managed to stay friends for so many years because Izuku was able to rein in his emotions. They really only became friends near the end of high school, after Hitoshi admitted that he found Izuku's "sunshine qualities" overwhelming but otherwise liked him. He needs emotional distance in order to get close to people, ironically. Accepting that led to a fulfilling friendship for both of them, and Izuku doesn't want to jeopardize that. He doesn't think Hitoshi would turn him away, but it probably *would* make his friend uncomfortable, and Izuku doesn't want to put that on him. Not if it isn't absolutely necessary.

There's Shoto, of course. Shoto is the one person he's certain would understand and who would definitely care—but Shoto would care a *lot.* And he's going through a lot of big changes right now, opening his own agency, settling into a new relationship. He lives three hours away by train—close enough that he could hop on a train and come see Izuku in an emergency, but far enough that Izuku could talk him out of it. All calling Shoto would do is worry him. Izuku doesn't want to do that unless it's real, unless it gets to be a big deal.

Shoto was there for Izuku that second year of high school when he wrote the note, and Izuku was there for Shoto. Between Endeavor and Dabi and All Might and Shigaraki, the two of them had their lives upended by the war more so than most of their classmates. They came out of it completely different people—that could be said for everyone, technically, but it was especially true for them.

Izuku never told Shoto about the note, but he's pretty sure his friend suspected. Shoto found him after one of his… Izuku doesn't know what to call them. It wasn't a suicide attempt, because he knew deep down that he didn't take enough or the right kind of pills. But he swallowed half a bottle of over-the-counter pain meds, passed out on his floor, and woke up with bile on his face.

Shoto had barged into his dorm room after a string of unanswered messages and calls, and Izuku explained by saying he was sick the night before, probably the leftovers he ate, nothing to worry about. Shoto's face was still impossible to read in those days, so Izuku told himself he got away with the lie and tried to put it out of his mind.

Izuku never told anyone, no one ever found out, and he moved on.

Now, all these years later, with his eyes locked on his sleeping medication and actually *afraid* of himself, Izuku feels a bit like he's being punished. For not trying harder to kill himself when he was a kid, for not succeeding, for not getting caught—he isn't sure.

Because maybe if Izuku hadn't had so much self-control in high school, he would have been forced to get help, and now he wouldn't be spending every day wishing he had the courage to die, trying to pretend he didn't feel this way. Or maybe he'd be dead.

Either way, preferable.

He regrets not taking advantage of the opportunity while he was young, when people still watched over him all the time. When he was surrounded by people whose job it was to care. Before he was

supposed to be so self-sufficient, so strong.

Back then, it felt stifling. Izuku knew that if anyone found out, he would be constantly supervised. His teachers would ask him questions, tell his mother. And his mother would drown him in her own emotions. His mother couldn't have helped him—she would have wanted to, but she would have smothered him instead. She always treated him like a little kid, and was always *so* ready for there to be something wrong with him so she could fix it.

Except now, as an adult, maybe Izuku wishes someone *was* paying closer attention to him. Because if he was that kid again, if he had those support systems still in place, he might not let it go to waste. He might feel ready to reach out. It might be worth the smothering.

But Izuku is an adult, and his friends have their own lives, and asking for help now would mean turning his entire life upside down. It would be making a big deal out of nothing.

It doesn't have to be a big deal, it can just be something we talk about sometime.

Well, yeah. There's *him.* But wouldn't that be the same? Aizawa has his own shit going on, he isn't Izuku's teacher anymore. Izuku doesn't want to bother him with something like this.

If you ever want to talk more about it, let me know. Seriously.

Izuku could text him tomorrow. He could bring it up next time they grabbed a beer. He could wait for Aizawa to ask.

Maybe Izuku will feel better in the morning.

Cautiously, Izuku grabs his bottle of sleeping pills and unscrews the top again. He tries not to think about how many are left, just shakes one out into his palm.

Except it isn't just one that comes out. It's three, then four, then five… Izuku keeps going. *Nine, ten, eleven…* He dumps the whole bottle into his palm and stares at the small pink tablets.

Is this really all it would take?

Villains have been trying for ages to take down the Pro Hero Deku. Is it really as easy as a small handful of pills?

He can feel the pressure building behind his eyes again.

If he does it now, how long will it take for someone to find him?

Easy to take them, just swallow, get some whiskey

Izuku's skin buzzes.

What would the media say?

If you don't do it tonight, you might not have enough left tomorrow, even with the booze

His face burns, he can't stop chewing on his lip, he can't stop counting the pills.

Driftawaydriftawaydriftawaydrift—

Would Aizawa feel responsible?

…

In one motion, Izuku puts the pills back in the bottle, screws on the cap, and gently sets it back on the bedside table.

Fuck.

Chapter End Notes

A shorty this time! Conclusion next time.

psst. *psssssssst.* I have a tumblr!

Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It wasn't like ten p.m. was an ungodly hour, especially for Shota, but it was late enough that the sound of his ringtone put him on high alert.

Who would be calling at this hour? Eri was down the hall in her room and Hizashi was in the living room watching some godawful reality show. His agency would page him, and they knew it was his day off anyway. Checking the caller ID didn't alleviate Shota's concern.

Midoriya.

As far as he knew, Midoriya was off-duty tonight. Shota had a bad feeling.

"Midoriya?"

The younger hero's voice was unsteady when he replied.

"Ah, uh… Aizawa."

"…what's going on, kid?"

Midoriya was silent for a moment, only the sound of deep, shaky breaths crackling through the connection. A thought occurred to Shota.

"Midoriya, is this a drunk dial?" he teased. Although to most his voice would sound just as flat as usual, Midoriya would pick up on it, he was sure.

"Uh, no, actually. Um. I have had a few, but that's not why…"

Okay, so this was something more serious. Shota softened his voice.

"What is it, kid?"

"I'm sorry to bother you, it's just…you know what we talked about, last time you were here?"

Oh, shit.

“Yeah. The note I found, right?”

“Yeah, um. It’s been on my mind since then, and I kind of realized…I actually still think about it a lot. Like, a *lot.* And I just thought it was normal. And I know you said I could talk to you…”

Midoriya was not the type to make unscheduled phone calls at ten p.m. just to talk, even about something serious.

“I did, and I meant it. I have to ask…are you safe? Are you thinking about it now?”

“I’m not, like, on the edge or anything.” A pause. “Well…”

Shota held his breath and waited for the kid to continue, but he didn’t.

“Well…?” he prompted.

When Midoriya spoke, he sounded more like the timid teenager he used to be than Shota had heard in a long, long time. His voice was higher and his words spilled out quickly, almost like one of those mumble-rants he used to get lost in.

“It’s just, um, I called because I was getting ready to take my sleeping pill, and I realized that every month when I start to get low I have this thought that I’m afraid because for the next week, I won’t have enough to kill myself. So without realizing it, every month, for that week, I stock up on booze and drink more than I usually do. Because maybe if I have a little alcohol in my system, and I decide to do it, it’ll be enough to make it work anyway. And I think this every month. And I never thought it was weird. And right now, I can’t stop thinking about it. Like, I *can’t stop.”*

Shota's heart sped up.

"Where are the pills now?"

"They're, uh, on the table in front of me. I've just been sitting here staring at them for at least twenty minutes. I haven't taken one yet. I was going to, but I poured out too many, and I couldn't stop picturing what would happen if I took them all. I've been drinking, and I have just enough left. How come I know that?"

It sounded like Midoriya was talking to himself at this point.

"Have I been this fucked up all along? Was finding a high school notebook really enough to send me over the edge? That's kind of pathetic, right?"

Midoriya was getting more and more lost in his head. Shota didn't like the direction he was going.

"Midoriya. Get away from the pills. I'm on my way over."

He started moving without waiting for a response. Hizashi called his name questioningly as Shota ran out the door, but he didn't respond. He'd explain later.

Midoriya's voice had a faraway quality that made Shota's heart rate pick up unpleasantly.

"You don't have to do that. I'll be fine. I don't think...I don't think I'll do it."

"Doesn't matter, I'm coming over anyway. Go into the other room and close the door. Or get out of the apartment, wait for me in the hallway."

Midoriya was silent for another moment before he exhaled shakily.

"Okay, dad. You win." He chuckled a little, but Shouta could hear the tears he was holding back.

He stayed on the phone and tried to keep Midoriya talking as he hopped in the car. The kid’s responses were halfhearted, but every word out of his mouth was a reassurance that he was listening to Shota and not spiraling further.

Shota was grateful he visited Midoriya often enough to have his building's door code memorized. He punched it in and took the stairs two at a time.

Even with the kid on the phone confirming he was still there, still present, it was a huge relief to see him in the flesh, alive and unharmed. Shota hesitated only a moment before sweeping his former student into a hug.

Izuku felt silly following Aizawa's instruction and leaving the room, but he some of the fear loosened in his chest when he closed his bedroom door behind him, so he didn’t regret it. He sat on his couch

for a few minutes but couldn't take his eyes off the bedroom door.

What the hell, he reasoned, and left his apartment altogether to wait in the hallway. Silly or not, he felt better. The less afraid he was, the more embarrassed he got, but he told himself he was just following Aizawa's instructions, so the embarrassment wasn't on him.

Never mind that he was the one to call his former teacher in the first place. Never mind that he was the one losing it over a handful of sleeping pills. Never mind that he was the one whose mental state was deteriorating just from reading a high school notebook. Nope, no sirree, not relevant.

Izuku was doing a good job practicing his denial until Aizawa came running up the stairs. He only had a few moments to pick up on the unguarded fear in the older man's eyes before he was swept into a crushing hug.

He froze at first, not used to physical contact like this, and certainly not used to it from his stoic, prickly colleague and former teacher.

But after a moment, he melted into the hug, completely against his will.

It had been *so long* since he'd had a hug like this. One of Aizawa's arms was pinning his upper arms to his sides and the other was cradling the back of his head, pressing it to the older man's shoulder. As he relaxed, Izuku hesitantly reached his own arms around Aizawa's torso and returned the embrace. It felt nice. Every point of contact between them buzzed on Izuku's skin, making him almost dizzy. He felt warm, and somehow *real* in a way he hadn't all night—maybe longer.

Izuku's mom hadn't held him like this since the war. She'd hugged him, of course, but never again like she was the one protecting him. Even though he had only been away for a few months, she acted like he was a stranger when he came back. He supposed he was, to her. So many secrets. As he got older, the distance grew. All their embraces were obligations now, quick and awkward. It had been months.

And of course Izuku's friends were as physically awkward as he was, if not more so. Shoto was his closest friend, and there was obviously not much instinct for physical contact there, although they could probably both use it. Iida was far too formal, even now, to offer casual hugs. And Uraraka had limited her physical affection after she started dating Tsu all the way back at graduation. Izuku had never been sure if it

was at Tsu's request or if it was because Uraraka's contact had held more than platonic intent.

Aizawa wasn't a very affectionate person, either. Izuku knew that. But this hug wasn't awkward, or cold, or obligatory. It felt like Aizawa was being comforted by it as much as he was comforting Izuku. As they gripped each other, Izuku felt the older hero's heart rate and breathing slow down. He realized that every exhale out of Aizawa's mouth was a whispered, "You're okay." Izuku wasn't sure if it was meant to comfort him or to reassure the other man. Either way, it made his eyes sting.

Even as he felt Aizawa calm down, Izuku could feel himself getting more and more worked up. It was all just so much. The realization that even if he tried to play this off now, he wouldn't be able to. The knowledge that Aizawa cared about him enough to rush over and run up the stairs. The acceptance that he maybe actually *did* come kind of close to killing himself tonight.

The physical sensation of the hug was overwhelming, but even as he felt Aizawa loosening his hold, Izuku held on tighter. It made him dizzy but he didn't want to let go.

Distantly, he realized he was hyperventilating. Crying, too, judging by the wetness on his face. Aizawa's hold on him loosened enough for him to rub circles on Izuku's back, but the older man didn't let go.

When Izuku finally got his breathing under control, he shuffled awkwardly out of his former teacher's arms and covered his face with both hands, letting out an exaggerated, exasperated groan.

"Nnnhh, fuuuck. I'm sorry—"

Aizawa cut him off.

"Shut up. Don't apologize." His tone was firm but not unkind. "Can we go inside for a minute to talk?"

Izuku grumbled but turned and let the older pro into his apartment, straightening his posture in an attempt to shake some of his embarrassment. It wasn't very effective, so Izuku gave up. Once inside the apartment, he fell back into the sofa and groaned again.

Aizawa sat beside him and just stared at him for a minute, then pulled out his phone.

“I need to let Hizashi know where I went. Are you okay if I tell him the gist of why I’m here? I’d rather not keep it from him for my own sake, but I’ll respect your privacy if you ask.”

“No, of course, you can tell him.”

Izuku was still feeling lightheaded from the physical contact, or maybe the gravity of the situation hitting him. The cat was out of the bag, and he trusted Yamada not to be weird about it. Probably. He at least recognized that it would be unfair to ask Aizawa to keep this to himself.

Aizawa put his phone away and leaned forward, elbows on his knees.

“First things first. Where are the pills, and is there anything else you’ve considered using that I should know about?”

“They’re, um, in my bedroom. There isn’t anything else.”

Aizawa stood up and went into Izuku’s bedroom without a word, returning after a few moments. He resumed his place on the couch and sighed before looking at Izuku.

“Alright. I’m going to hang onto these for now. I don’t want to overstep, but I also don’t want you to kill yourself.”

Izuku winced at his blunt words—but he had a point.

“No, it’s okay… I think that’s probably for the best. I don’t really trust myself right now.”

“Tell me where your head is at.”

Izuku sighed. *Why not.*

“It’s like…in the front of my head, I don’t want to die. I know it’s wrong and I shouldn’t be thinking about it. But after finding that old note, and talking to you, I’ve been thinking more about it. I’m legit concerned by how much I was thinking about it without realizing. I think those thoughts have been in the back of my head this whole time, and I’m only just now recognizing the patterns.”

Izuku sighed again and ran his hands through his hair, tugging lightly.

“But this fixation on the pills… Nothing like this has happened before, or at least not since high school. I honestly think it just happened because I realized how fucked up it all is, not because the urge is more

intense than usual. It's still just in the background. But all of a sudden I was paying attention to it, and I couldn't stop thinking about it."

Izuku chanced a look at Aizawa. He was watching Izuku intently with an unreadable expression on his face. He made no move to speak, so Izuku continued.

"Basically, I don't actually have any plans to kill myself immediately, it's still more an abstract desire. I don't think I'll do it tonight. But I scared myself, realizing I *do* kind of want to do it."

Izuku choked on the end of the sentence. It frightened him, admitting it out loud. Admitting it to himself. It wasn't just "I can't stop thinking about it," it wasn't some external force making him fixate on the pills. It was *him.* It was because he *wanted* to die. Or, not to die, exactly… just *be dead.*

Fuck.

"Okay. Okay, cool."

Aizawa did not sound like he thought it was cool. He sounded more like he was trying to convince himself, or process the situation. Izuku felt bad for dragging him into this…but he *had* offered, right?

"Would you like me to stay?" The older man focused his attention back on Izuku. "Or you can come to ours? It's not that I don't trust you, it would just be...reassuring, to know you're not alone."

"I mean, I don't think you're wrong not to trust me right now. It would make me feel better for you to hold onto those pills tonight, but I still need them to sleep. I think sleep will help, probably. I'm not sure how much more I can think about this tonight."

"Want me to stay here, then?"

"Only if you want to. I do really think I'll make it through the night, but you're right that it would be nice not to be alone."

"Cool, cool. What else can I do? I'm not your dad, as much as we joke, so I don't want to overstep. I'm not sure where the line is."

Izuku smiled at that—as much as he looked up to Aizawa, and as much as they joked, they really were more like peers—friends, even—now than teacher and student. But Aizawa was still older, and more experienced, and protective. Izuku trusted him in ways he couldn't

trust his classmates.

“Honestly…I wouldn’t mind if you overstepped a little right now. I’ve been thinking about how I wish I would have reached out back then, when I still had a network of people who cared about me and were responsible for looking after me. I mean, I’m an adult, and I don’t need the same things I did then. But I’ve kind of lost faith in my own judgement, given how often I use ‘talking myself out of suicide’ as a coping mechanism. So, if there’s something you want to suggest, or whatever, please don’t worry about overstepping. Please err on the side of overstepping.”

Izuku stopped himself. Was this asking too much?

“Ah, but, I don’t mean to make my mental health your responsibility! It’s not, please don’t feel obligated—"

“Izuku. Look at me.” Aizawa leaned closer to him and pinned him with his gaze. “I want to help you. It will make me feel better if I can do this for you. If you asked me not to, I would have to restrain myself from helping you. I would do it, but it would be difficult. Let me do this.”

And, okay, Izuku knew Aizawa cared. They’d been through enough together at this point that it was obvious. They’d helped each other through tough times, losses, injuries. He’d even begrudgingly admitted it out loud a few times. But hearing him say that not only did he *want* to help Izuku, but he’d have to actively stop himself from doing it? The conviction in his voice?

Izuku felt himself tearing up again. He didn’t cry as easily anymore, thank goodness, or he’d be in a puddle already.

Aizawa seemed to see his acceptance in his face, and continued.

“Okay well I know you already have a therapist, so you should make an appointment first thing tomorrow. Call and ask for an emergency appointment. I know it might not feel like that big a deal, like you weren’t really going to do it, but the way you were talking on the phone… I think it was a closer call than you’re saying, whether you realize it or not.”

Was it that obvious?

Yeah, probably.

And that was enough to push Izuku to tears again. They were quiet tears, not like when he was younger, or even his sobbing earlier in the hall. At least he could keep talking through them.

“I didn’t, I don’t actually *want* to kill myself, not when I think hard about it. But the fucked up thing is, I don’t want to *live* either. I just keep looking for that opposite feeling, that feeling of ‘of course I don’t want to kill myself,’ but it just isn’t there. And that’s fucked up, right? That’s not normal.”

Aizawa shook his head but didn’t say anything. He had a hand over his mouth—wait, were his eyes red? Izuku wasn’t sure he could keep his tears quiet if Aizawa got emotional.

His voice got thicker as he cried.

“I thought that was normal, that’s been normal for so long.”

His former teacher’s voice cracked when he spoke—yep, that was emotion.

“I’m sorry I didn’t notice. How—how long?”

“Literally forever,” Izuku admitted. “I was quirkless before I met All Might, you know. I started getting spider lilies when I was 10. My first year at UA was the happiest year of my life. Do you realize how fucked up that is?”

Although Izuku was addressing Aizawa, his attention turned inward.

“I nearly died so many times, people *did* die, but it was the first time I went more than a few days without being told in graphic detail how I should kill myself. It was the first time I had friends, people besides my mom who would miss me if I was gone.”

Anger crept into his voice.

“It was the first time I saw a future for myself that was actually within my grasp. The first time people expected anything good out of me and I actually had the power to meet those expectations. No fucking wonder I’m still fucked up.”

“Yeah, kid, that’s fucked up. I’m sorry I didn’t see it then.”

Izuku looked up, surprised at the genuine remorse in Aizawa’s voice.

“You couldn’t have. Like I said, I was *really* good at hiding things. You know that. Plus, we had a lot going on—the war and all that.”

Aizawa snorted. “Yeah, well, I know now.”

He reached out to ruffle Izuku’s hair—an unfamiliar sensation, especially as an adult, but not unwelcome.

“I can’t really call you problem child anymore, can I? More of a problem adult.”

Izuku recognized the teasing as an expression of fondness, and it made him smile.

Aizawa continued, “Now get some blankets out while I let Hizashi know I’m staying. We’re watching Spirited Away, no arguments, I know you like Mononoke better but that’s not what we need right now.”

Midoriya fell asleep not even halfway through the movie. Once Shota was sure the kid—not *a* kid, but still *his* kid—was asleep, he turned the movie off. He couldn’t stop glancing over at Midoriya anyway.

This was not what he’d been expecting after finding that note. Maybe a serious conversation, yeah, but not this. Still, he was glad Midoriya had felt comfortable coming to him. How bad would it have gotten if they hadn’t looked through his old notebooks?

Would he have…?

No. No point in thinking about it now. Midoriya had reached out and asked for help, and Shota wasn’t going to let go until he was sure the kid was alright.

They had a lot of work to do, starting in the morning. But it was going to be alright, eventually. Shota would make sure of it.

Chapter End Notes

It's the end! What did you think? As much as I wanted to explore recovery more, I felt like it had to end here for my own sanity.

I wrote this as a way to expunge my own toxic emotions, so maybe things are a bit ooc, but I hope you enjoyed it anyway!

It wasn't my intention when I started writing, but I realized that I

probably unconsciously took a lot of inspiration from one of my all-time favorite fics/series, our souls are open wounds by orkestrations. If you liked my fic, you'll like that even better! It's.....phenomenal.

Anywho, I have a tumblr where you can see even more of my rambling author's notes and updates on what I'm working on or even ask me questions or idk, whatever you want!

End Notes

Edit: I'm so honored when people tell me this fic has helped them in some way or even just that they relate to it; I want you continue to leave those comments! But please, for the sake of my own health, don't tell me the specifics of your method (even if its hypothetical).

If you're in the US: dial 988, visit www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org, check out this guide from save.org

Elsewhere: international resources on save.org

Getting help doesn't have to be a big scary thing that turns your life upside down, although sometimes that ends up being the best course of action. You can chat with someone online, find a sliding-scale therapist, learn journaling techniques... Even just finding someone to talk to can help.

I unfortunately cannot be that person, because I am in the midst of my own snarled recovery, and comments that refer to specific methods are not good for me. You won't be sending me over the edge or anything, but you will be making it that much harder for me to crawl back. Which I'm trying very, very hard to do.

If you know of other/better resources than the ones I listed, or if there's anything wrong with the ones I pasted here, please let me know in the comments.

Thank you for reading—the response has been overwhelmingly positive, and even the comments I find troubling are generally positive. I'm not upset with anyone for posting those things, just requesting no more going forward. 🩶🩶🩶🩶🩶

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!